

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 1925

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SUBJ: LUCIEN RIGAUD CASE

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1834

BEGIN SUMMARY. SUNDAY NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE ARTICLE BY
WENDELL RAWLS JR. ENTITLED "BABY DOC'S HAITIAN TERROR"
(WHICH APPARENTLY ESCAPED NOTICE OF HAITIAN CENSORS) WAS
WIDELY DISTRIBUTED TO TIMES' SUBSCRIBERS IN PORT AU PRINCE.
ARTICLE APPEARED WHILE TRIAL OF ANTONIO DUPUY (REFTEL)
CONTINUES IN HAITIAN COURTS. THIS CABLE REPORTS DUPUY'S
LATEST STATEMENTS, LOCAL REACTION TO RIGAUD CASE, AND
EMBASSY COMMENTS ON TIMES ARTICLE. END SUMMARY.

1. ANTONIO DUPUY (REFERRED TO IN THE HAITIAN PRESS BY HIS
NICKNAME YABOULE) MADE A SECOND PUBLIC DECLARATION ABOUT
LUCIEN RIGAUD TO THE COURT ON MAY 11. DUPUY STATED THAT BE
"FORGOT" TO MENTION ON MAY 9 THAT RIGAUD CONFESSED DURING
THEIR YEAR-LONG STAY IN THE MEXICAN EMBASSY TOGETHER THAT
HE ACTUALLY DID KILL THE YARDMAN OF WHOSE MURDER HE IS
ACCUSED. ACCORDING TO DUPUY, RIGAUD SHOT THE YARDMAN WITH A
GUN OTHER THAN THE ONE HE PRODUCED FOR POLICE EXAMINATION
AND CLAIMED TO BE USING THAT EVENING.

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2. THE EXTENSIVE DECLARATIONS OF DUPUY ABOUT THE RIGAUD
AFFAIR ARE THE TALK OF THE TOWN AND HAVE BEEN COMMENTED ON
BY THE MORE INDEPENDENT HAITIAN MEDIA, RADIO METROPOLE AND
RADIO HAITI INTER IN PARTICULAR. MUCH HAS BEEN MADE OF THE
FACT THAT UNTIL THE TRIAL OF DUPUY AND HIS CO-DEFENDANTS IN
THE CIMENT D'HAITI CASE, REPORTERS WERE NOT ALLOWED TO TAPE
RECORD COURT PROCEEDINGS. THIS BAN WAS SUDDENLY LIFTED AND

REPORTERS FROM THE GOVERNMENT-RUN NEWSPAPER, LE NOUVEAU MONDE, AND RADIO STATION, RADIO NATIONALE, WERE CONSPICUOUSLY ON HAND WHEN DUPUY BEGAN HIS PERFORMANCE MAY 9. INDEPENDENT COMMENTATORS NOTE THAT THE ELABORATE INTRODUCTION OF THE RIGAUD CASE INTO THE UNRELATED CIMENT D'HAITI TRIAL MAKES A MOCKERY OF THE GOVERNMENT CLAIM THAT THE RIGAUD AFFAIR IS A SIMPLE CRIMINAL MATTER. THERE IS PUBLIC SPECULATION ABOUT WHAT GUARANTEES DUPUY MAY HAVE BEEN GIVEN AND WHY.

3. IN THE EYES OF MOST HAITIANS, IF NOT OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE RIGAUD CASE HAS BEEN IRREVOCABLY "POLITICIZED" BY THE EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK. THE COMMENTATORS ARE OPENLY SAYING THAT THERE MUST BE MORE TO THE AFFAIR THAN MEETS THE EYE, ESPECIALLY WHEN BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY ARE SO INTERESTED IN LUCIEN RIGAUD. THEY ALSO NOTE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION MAKES IT PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE MEXICAN EMBASSY TO ACCEDE TO THE REQUEST THAT RIGAUD BE RETURNED TO HAITIAN JUSTICE.

4. WE REALIZE THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL NOT WISH TO RESPOND IN DETAIL TO THE ARTICLE BY WENDELL RAWLS IN THE MAY 14 NEW YORK TIMES' MAGAZINE SECTION. HOWEVER, TO PROVIDE SOME PERSPECTIVE FOR READERS IN WASHINGTON, WE WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE AFFAIR WHICH RAWLS EITHER IGNORES OR OF WHICH HE IS UNAWARE:

(A) FIRST, THERE IS THE QUESTION OF LUCIEN RIGAUD'S CREDI-
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BILITY. RAWLS ALLUDES TO THE FACT THAT HE HAD THE "REPUTATION OF BEING AN ABRASIVE, ARROGANT, AGGRESSIVE BUSINESS-MAN", BUT SAYS LITTLE MORE ABOUT THIS SIDE OF HIS PERSONALITY. NUMEROUS BUSINESS SOURCES IN PORT AU PRINCE INCLUDING SOME WHO HAVE KNOWN LUCIEN RIGAUD SINCE HIS YOUTH TELL US THAT RIGAUD WAS A BULLY IN SCHOOL AND HAS LONG HAD THE REPUTATION OF BEING BOTH UNSTABLE AND DISHONEST. ONE AMERICAN BUSINESS-MAN RECALLS RIGAUD VISITING HIS PLANT BRANDISHING A PISTOL AND THREATENING TO KILL HIS (THE AMERICAN'S) PLANT FOREMAN. OTHERS IN PORT AU PRINCE REFER TO RIGAUD MORE SIMPLY AS A "MADMAN", AND ALLEGE THAT BOTH HIS FATHER AND BROTHER ALSO EXHIBITED CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTAL INSTABILITY.

(B) NONE THE LESS, MANY ASPECTS OF THE RIGAUD STORY AS REPORTED BY RAWLS ARE TRUE AND HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED BY INDEPENDENT SOURCES. FOR EXAMPLE, MRS. RIGAUD'S ACCOUNT OF THE VISIT TO THE NATIONAL PENITENTIARY BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEES OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY AT LEAST A HALF-DOZEN OTHER SOURCES. MOREOVER WE HAVE JUST LEARNED FROM A FRIEND OF MRS. RIGAUD THAT SHE WAS INDEED COVERED WITH INSECT BITES WHEN RELEASED FROM PRISON.

(C) IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PETIONVILLE PRISON

CELLS WHERE LUCIEN RIGAUD WAS HELD IN DECEMBER 1975 AND WHERE CLAIRE-LISE RIGAUD WAS HELD IN FEBRUARY 1976 HAVE SINCE BEEN TORN DOWN AND REPLACED. MRS. RIGAUD, BEFORE SHE LEFT FOR SWITZERLAND, TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT SHE BELIEVED HER TAPE-RECORDED ACCOUNT OF HER EXPERIENCES PLAYED BY HER FRIEND TO PRESIDENT DUVALIER WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING ABOUT THIS CHANGE.

(D) CONDITIONS IN THE NATIONAL PENITENTIARY WERE CERTAINLY DEPLORABLE WHEN LUCIEN RIGAUD FIRST ARRIVED THERE IN MARCH 1976, BUT JUDGING FROM THE ACCOUNTS OF OTHER PRISONERS, HIS DESCRIPTION OF CONDITIONS--PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO THE MORTALITY RATE--APPEARS EXAGGERATED. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN HAITIAN PRISONS IN THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF, LARGELY AFTER
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LUCIEN RIGAUD'S ESCAPE. IN MID-SEPTEMBER 1976, JEAN CLAUDE DUVALIER PERSONALLY VISITED THE NATIONAL PENITENTIARY SHORTLY AFTER RECEIVING THE CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE ICRC TEAM WHICH HAD VISITED THE PREVIOUS FEBRUARY. OBVIOUSLY DISTURBED BY WHAT HE FOUND, THE PRESIDENT ORDERED REFORMS (BOTH IN THE CONDITIONS OF IMPRISONMENT AND IN ACCESS TO TRIAL. TWO WEEKS LATER 261 PRISONERS WERE RELEASED FROM THE NATIONAL PENITENTIARY, INCLUDING THREE POLITICAL PRISONERS. IN DECEMBER THERE WAS A FURTHER RELEASE OF 164 PRISONERS, THIS TIME INCLUDING 90 POLITICAL PRISONERS, SOME OF WHOM HAD BEEN HELD AT FORT DIMANCHE. WE NOW KNOW THAT AFTER THESE RELEASES, OTHER PRISONERS WERE MOVED FROM FORT DIMANCHE TO EITHER THE NATIONAL PENITENTIARY OR TO THE DESSALINES BARRACKS AND NURSED BACK TO HEALTH OVER A PERIOD OF SEVERAL MONTHS. A FURTHER 21 PRISONERS WERE RELEASED IN FEBRUARY 1977, ALL POLITICAL, AND THEN ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1977 THE GOVERNMENT OF HAITI ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS RELEASING ALL 105 REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS. SINCE THAT DATE, WE HAVE QUESTIONED INNUMERABLE SOURCES REGARDING ALLEGATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS STILL HOLDING A FEW POLITICAL PRISONERS BUT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO DEVELOP ANY EVIDENCE TO DISPUTE THE GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM THAT ALL SURVIVING POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE RELEASED LAST SEPTEMBER.

(E) FINALLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS CLEARLY MADE AN EFFORT TO BRING CRIMINAL CASES TO TRIAL IN A MUCH MORE EXPEDITIOUS FASHION THAT IN THE RECENT PAST. THE TRIALS OF THE MILITIA ASSAILANTS OF PASTOR NEREE AND OF 2ND LT. CLAUDE REMY IN PARCH (PAP 1114) WERE FOLLOWED BY A SERIES OF DRUG TRAFFICKING TRIALS IN APRIL (PAP 1923) AND NOW BY THE CIMENT D'HAITI TRIAL.
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